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ABSTRACT

For use by teachers with access to writing centers, this guide provides criteria for choosing appropriate computer software for writing centers and lists current choices of good software. The first section explains why teachers, who have direct experience with the needs of students and the objectives of writing instruction, are the most qualified school personnel to choose writing center software. The second section lists software by category: record keeping/databases, drill and practice/computer assisted instruction, complete writing packages, prewriting tools, writing tools/word processors (further subdivided into simple, more powerful, and most powerful groups), revision aids, spellers, publishing packages, and others (including some writing game programs and bulletin board software). Within each category are definitions and brief comments on writing center uses, followed by listings of actual software packages, their publishers, and the microcomputer brands with which they are compatible (Apple II, MacIntosh, or IBM). The third section consists of a bibliography of useful books, magazines, and other resources for integrating computers with language arts subsections divided into six subsections: general books, writing, language, reading, resources, and newsletters. (SKC)

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Using Computer Software in the Writing Center

Bonnie Sunstein

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USING COMPUTER SOFTWARE IN THE WRITING CENTER

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Choosing computer software for a writing center can be a prohibitive task. The computer people drone about our hardware needs, networking our furniture, and re-wiring our buildings. The deans yammer about budgets, management and assessment, and sometimes they give us hardware. The academic departments pine about the articulate, fluent students they used to have, and beg us to create them. The tutors and the students whirr in and out, wishing we could offer more help. There are never secretaries. In the meantime, as always, the writing center director flits among them all, touching down as often as possible to organize the buzzing chaos, and for an occasional moment, glances at a computer catalogue, much of which is written in the jargon of another world. No wonder we are insecure. We don't trust ourselves to make expensive decisions based on other people's ideas and another world's jargon. We forget that we do remain, in fact, the most qualified people to make software decisions for our centers. We are the only ones who can answer these questions:

- What will we do with it when we get it, given that we wanted it in the first place?
- Who's going to use it, and what for?
- How does it differ from the other supports we have?
- How much can we get it to tell us that we don't know now?
- What will it do to meet our objectives for better writing and better thinking?
- What can it do differently to encourage writing and thinking that our current objectives haven't met?

Our most important qualification is that we <u>do</u> know about teaching writing:

1. That the best way to teach writing is to get students to write
2. That careful prewriting, multiple drafting, revising, determining audiences, and meaningful publishing strategies make better papers
3. That the best teachers are human, and often are those who work individually with students
4. That the process approach has shown us that we can't hide behind the quantifiable "skills" of spelling, syntax, and grammar--they are the mechanical features of writing
5. That writing critically and creatively comes with structuring and organizing thinking

Appropriate computer software can assist us with each of these objectives, as long as we remember to use our best practices as teachers when we look at software, as we would choosing books for our courses. Our curriculum, the structure of our centers, and our objectives for the improvement of writing should dictate our software choices, not the center's furniture or wiring systems, the administration's assessments, or the students' average SAT scores. Our choices can help us keep more accurate records, help

our students revise, allow our personal contact with students to be more meaningful, and eliminate more of the "bookkeeping" of writing papers.

Most lists of software come from computer companies and publishers' catalogues. They are organized generically, by computer or by function. This is a list designed according to the categories and practices we value for the teaching of writing, and for the very special needs of a writing center, to empower the environment and enable an even better interaction between school and center, teacher and student, writer and reader.

A SAMPLING OF SOFTWARE FOR THE WRITING CENTER

Bonnie Sunstein/ Rivier College/ Nashua, NH
Joan Dunfey/ Lesley College/ Cambridge, MA

NOTES:

1. Since computer software is technological innovation, this list is becoming obsolete as you read it. Look for ads, brochures and catalogues to update it.

2. Our bibliographic convention (with apologies to MLA and APA): category, name: publisher, special features.

3. We have listed software for the three microcomputers most popular in schools: "Apple" refers to the Apple family of computers; the Apple IIe, IIc, and the new IIgs, "Mac" refers to the MacIntosh (an Apple product), and "IBM" refers to the IBM family of computers; the IBM PC, AT, XT, and all other computers that are "IBM compatible."

4. Not all software works with all computers, nor do all word processors work with all printers. Check the "DOS" (Disk Operating System) and compatibility before buying software. Software writers are always tinkering, revising and re-publishing. Sometimes there are new versions available for already existing computers or software that was previously unavailable. Be sure that you're buying the latest version, or that you'll know how to get an "upgrade" when it becomes available.

RECORD KEEPING ("INTEGRATED TOOLS": spreadsheet/data base/word processor) Excellent for keeping track of placements, scores, tutor/tutee contacts, hours, numbers of papers, etc.

PFS File (Apple, IBM, Mac): Software Publishing
Appleworks: (Apple): Apple
ZyIndex (IBM): Zylab
MasterFile (IBM):
Lotus (IBM): Lotus Development Corp.
Jazz (Mac): Lotus Development Corp.
MultiPlan (spreadsheet), Microsoft File (database), Microsoft Chart: Microsoft

DRILL AND PRACTICE ("CAI"- Computer Assisted Instruction) A caveat: Be sure to preview CAI software before you buy it; look at types of exercises (Can they be done just as efficiently with a workbook, a pencil, and a teacher's manual? Are the authors English teachers or computer programmers? Are the skills appropriate? Is the purpose of the exercise clear to the student? Is it useful? Can the student use the feedback diagnostically or

heuristically? Remember--a computer quantify and can keep track of hundreds of sub-skills for hundreds of students.

GrammarLab (Apple, IBM): Little, Brown, Inc
M-ss-ng L-nks (Apple, IBM): Sunburst. A unique program, designed to create true student/text interaction. Can be modified for texts specific to courses--ESL, readings from your own Freshman reader, etc.
SAT drill: available for most computers from many publishers
grammar drill packages: available for most computers from many publishers

COMPLETE WRITING PACKAGES (Integrate pre-writing, organizing and thinking strategies, revising and editing capacities with an internal word processor or with a designated external word processor)

Computer Writing Resource Kit (Apple, IBM, Mac): D.C. Heath. Works only with selected word processors
HBJ Writer (IBM): Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich. Integrated with word processor and revising program
Writer's Helper (Apple, IBM): Conduit. Eleven different programs, integrated with external word processor
The Writing Workshop (Apple): Milliken. Totally integrated large package with many disks including its own simple word processor.

PREWRITING ("Invention": heuristics, outliners, genre-based organizers--we have not included word-game programs). For a more intensive review, see Parham, Charles. "Conquering the Dreaded Blank Page." Classroom Computer Learning Sept. 1986: 39-44.

Complete Writer (Apple): Learnco. Must be used with Bank Street Writer
Prewrite (Apple): Boynton/Cook. Teacher can add questions
Homework Helper: Writing (Apple): Spinnaker
SEEN (Apple): Helen Schwartz/PO Box 911/Rochester, MI 48063. Oriented toward literature
ThinkWorks (Apple): Megahaus. Outliner, "idea processor" for Appleworks.
Interactive Writing Tools (Apple): Britannica. Six "modes"; expository, narrative, poetry, business and friendly letter, newswriting, integrates with "The Writer's Assistant" software.
Proteus (Apple, IBM): Research Design Associates. Uses several common approaches: "looping"--freewriting, focusing, freewriting again, "cubing"--define, compare, contrast, argue for and against, and "5 W's".
Quill (Apple, IBM): D.C. Heath. Includes word processor and five "planners," methods of sharing writing. Teacher can add questions
TOPOI (Apple, IBM): Hugh Burns/Air Force Resources Lab. Based on classical rhetorical strategies. Public domain.

Think Tank (Apple, IBM, Mac): Living Videotext. Allows and creates flexible manipulation of outlines.
Max Think (IBM): Max Think. Allows and creates manipulation of outlines, clustering of ideas.
Calliope (Apple, Mac): Innovision. Processes ideas visually, in a non-linear way

WRITING ("Word Processors" refer to the software packages, not the computers themselves. Think about the level of sophistication at which your students need to write; how much text they can put on a disk, what kind of formats they need to use, etc.)

SIMPLE:

Magic Slate (Apple): Sunburst. 20,40,or 80 columns; can do subscripts, footnotes
Bank Street Writer (Apple, IBM): Broderbund and Scholastic. Most popular grade school word processor. Has speller, data base, story starters, many "support" software available.
Homeword (Apple, IBM): Sierra On-Line

MORE POWERFUL (amount of space, choices of formats, editing and text mobility):

AppleWriter (Apple): Apple. Simple to learn.
FrEd Writer (Apple): San Diego Tech Center. Very similar to Apple Writer. Public domain--free, can be copied.
Appleworks (Apple): Apple. Integrated with data base and spreadsheet; most popular in this category.
MouseWord (Apple): International Solutions. Write/edit mode and format mode, has mail merge, modem link, and glossary similar to MacWrite
MouseWrite (Apple): Roger Wagner Publishing. Similar to MacWrite, pre-configured for 13 printers.
PFS Write (Apple, IBM version,"Writer's Assistant"): PFS. Has data base, but 5 page limit in memory.
Electric Pencil (IBM).
MacWrite (Mac)

MOST POWERFUL (commonly used by professionals):

Wordstar (Apple, IBM)
MicrosoftWord (Mac, IBM)
Word Perfect (IBM)
Displaywrite I (IBM)

REVISING ("Diagnostics"--scan text, highlight usage and grammar errors.) For a more intensive review, see Kovacs, Deborah. "Turning First Drafts into Final Drafts." Classroom Computer Learning Oct. 86: 36-39.

MECC Readibility (Apple): MECC (Minnesota Educational Computing Corporation)
MECC Editor (Apple): MECC. Works with AppleWriter

Ghost Writer (Apple): MECC. Works with six standard word processors.
Homer (Apple): Charles Scribner's Sons
Sensible Grammar (Apple): Sensible Software. Works with AppleWorks, AppleWriter, PFS:Write, WordPerfect, and most ProDos word processors.
Grammatik (Apple, IBM):
Writer's Workbench (IBM):
MacProof (Mac): ALP (Automated Language Processing) Systems Writing Corp. Part of a "networked" writing system, designed for entire labs.
NoteBene (Mac, IBM): Dragonfly Software (available through MLA). Integrated data base/bibliography/word processor

SPELLERS (Built-in dictionaries that scan text, highlight spelling errors). For a more intensive review, see Eiser, Leslie. "I Luv to Rite! Spelling Checkers in the Writing Classroom." Classroom Computer Learning. Nov/Dec.86: 50-57.

Bank Street Speller (Apple): Broderbund. Works only with Bank Street Writer.
Sensible Speller (Apple, IBM): Sensible Software. Works with most word processors
MegaWorks (Apple): Megahaus. Works with AppleWorks, and includes mailmerge.
Webster's New World Spelling Checker (Apple, IBM): Simon and Schuster. Very complete, works with most word processors.
The Reference Set (IBM): Reference Software. Includes a built-in thesaurus, works with most IBM word processors.
Speller (Mac): Hayden
MacSpell (Mac): Apple
MacSpellWrite (Mac): Assimilation Process
The Right Word (Mac): Microsoft. Works with Microsoft Word, includes a thesaurus

PUBLISHING ("graphics" programs; allow for pictures, layout, paste-up; good for newspapers, booklets, flyers and newsletters)

StoryMaker (Apple): Scholastic. Combines graphics and text
Bank Street Story Book (Apple): Mindscape. Uses joystick, Koala pad for drawing, has text editor
Newsroom (Apple, IBM): Springboard. Combines headlines, fonts, columns, "clip art."
MultiScribe (Apple): StyleWare. Includes complete word processor, fonts, typestyles and sizes, and custom designs such as those in the Mac software.
Fontrix (Apple): Data Transforms. Allows versatile typesetting and graphics. Can be combined with standard word processors.
Printshop (Apple, IBM): Broderbund. Headlines, "clip art," many choices of fonts and sizes.
Fantavision (Apple): Broderbund. Does animation; can be used creatively with scripting exercises.

MacPaint (Apple,Mac): Apple. Uses mouse for drawing, has enormous choices of fonts, borders, sizes, shades, etc.
FullPaint (Mac): Apple. Like MacPaint, only better. Can manipulate direction.
Mac the Knife (Mac): Miles Computing. Does drawing.
Click-Art (Mac): T/Maker. Has many clip-art drawings to choose from.
McPix (Mac):Magnum. Similar to Click-Art.
Microsoft Draw (Mac):Microsoft. Clip-art programs to add to Mac text.
PageMaker (Mac): Aldus. When combined with word processor and clip-art, can do professional looking layouts.
MacPublisher (Mac): Boston Software Pub. Also does layout.
ReadySetGo (Mac): Manhattan Graphics. Developed by graphic artists for sophisticated effects.

OTHER IDEAS FOR THE WRITING CENTER:

1. Some writing-game programs offer interesting subjects and formats; here is a partial list of ones worth looking at:
   Storytree. Creates "branching" stories.
   Suspect Sentences
   CompuPoem. Formulaic poetry writing. Sensitizes students to elements of a poem.
   SuperScoop. News writing format.

2. Public networks ("bulletin boards"), accessible by modem and telephone line, can offer wonderful communication links to other writing communities and research resources. Here are two:
   The Source (a data-based library)
   Participate (a network of computerized college writing teachers and centers)

RESOURCES FOR COMPUTERS AND LANGUAGE ARTS

(thanks to William Wresch, U. Of Wisconsin)

GENERAL BOOKS:

Adams and Jones, ed. Teaching Humanities in the Microelectronic Age. England:Open University Press.

Daniel Chandler Council for Educational Technology, Exploring English With Microcomputers. England

Dickson and Raymond. Language Arts Computer Book Reston.

Marcus and Chandler, Taylor and Francis. Computers and Literacy 242 Cherry Street, Phila, PA 19106

Standford, Jaycox, and Auten, Computers in the English Classroom. NCTE

WRITING:

Collins and Sommers, ed. Writing On-Line. Boynton-Cook.

Daiute, Colette. Computers and Writing. Addison Wesley.

Halpern and Liggett, Computers and Composing. Southern Ill. Univ. Press. (NCTE)

Lawlor, ed. Computers in Composition Instruction. SWRL Educational Research and Development. 4665 Lampson, Los Almitos, CA.

Wresch, William, ed. The Computer in Composition Instruction. NCTE.

LANGUAGE:

Underwood, Linguistics, Computers and the Language Teacher Newbury House.

Weizenbaum. Computer Power and Human Reason. Freeman and Co.

READING:

Geoffrion, Leo and Olga. Computers and Reading Instruction Addison Wesley.

Mason and Blanchard. Computer Applications in Reading. IRA.

RESOURCES:

monthly magazine column "Computers in the Teaching of English" in The Computing Teacher. U. of Oregon, 1787 Agate St, Eugene,OR 97403

Computers, Reading, and Language Arts. Modern Learning Publishers, 1308 East 38th St. Oakland, CA, 94602

Appleby, Bruce, ed. in English Journal reviews of current software (alternate months)

articles in CCC. College English, Writing Center Journal, Writing Lab Newsletter, Classroom Computer Learning.

Olivieri, Peter. Wheels for the Mind Apple University Consortium (quarterly, prepared at Boston College) reviews status of Apple Consortium projects and MacIntosh products; includes bibliographies and reviews

NEWSLETTERS:

Computers and Composition Cynthia Selfe, ed. Humanities Dept, Michigan Technological U, Houghton, MI 49931

ACE (Assembly for Computers in English) Tom Decker, ed. Westview Centennial Secondary School, 755 Oakdale Rd, North York, Ontario, Canada M3N 1W7

CWP (Creative Word Processing) 2210 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 365, Santa Monica, CA 90403

Research in Word Processing Newsletter Morgan and Schwartz, ed. South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. Rapid City,SD 57701

English Microlab Registry Tom Barker, ed. 1211 47th St, Lubbock, TX 79409